

HEADWATERS

NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

2004 NEWSLETTER - 2003 ANNUAL REPORT - Issue 42

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Bartow New Executive Director

On April 22nd, I began a new era of my public service as the Executive Director of the Tug Hill Commission and it is both a privilege and pleasure to join a team of dedicated professionals serving the Tug Hill region. As the former Director of the Division of Local Government Services at the New York Department of State, I always admired the Commission's grass-roots involvement of local officials. Tug Hill is a unique region of rural New York and in my new capacity, I look forward to continuing the Commission's strong partnership with the region's communities.

Throughout its history the Commission has taken the lead in promoting the concepts of home rule and sustainable development. The Commission and its community partners have created a rural development model that allows communities to articulate a vision for their future while sustaining the very natural values that make the region a special place. In my new capacity, I look forward to working with Tug Hill elected officials and public policy leaders to further the region's potential.

In my first few months on the job, I have been learning about the history of the region and the projects and activities the Commission has been involved in. I want to thank the staff for their time in aiding my transition and helping me to gain an understanding of the issues and opportunities that face the region. It has also been a tremendous value to spend time with Bob Quinn and Ben Coe to learn from their tenure with the Commission and I can only hope that my time and service will be as fruitful.

I have also been traveling throughout the region with circuit riders meeting chief elected officials and have met with almost every supervisor and mayor on Tug Hill. If we haven't had the time to talk yet, we will soon. For those I have met, thank you for your time and thoughts on issues that we face and opportunities that the region holds. Please do not hesitate to call if there is something I can do to help.

In my new capacity, I also look forward to continuing the Tug Hill Commission's strong partner-

ships with agencies and private sector enterprises and to continuing to work with many of you on economic development and land management issues. My experience is that half the challenge in rural America is in establishing the necessary partnerships to build local capacity and capitalize on the opportunities we share.

My wife Janet and I look forward to settling in the Tug Hill region and sharing a lot of time with new friends and acquaintances. This new position will allow me the opportunity for more direct involvement in helping to establish a sense of place and enhance the viability of communities. I look forward to working with the local officials and citizens of Tug Hill in helping to realize the region's fullest potential.



Left to Right: John Bartow with former executive directors Bob Quinn (1993 - 2004) and Ben Coe (1973 - 1993). The pair of antique wooden skis they are holding have adorned the director's office since early in Coe's tenure.



Meeting with Henry Piseski, Supervisor, Town of Amboy.



Meet the Tug Hill Commission Staff

Commission staff provide support to Tug Hill councils of governments in community and economic development, land use planning, natural resource management, geographic information systems (GIS) and related fields.

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“Helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region”

EBFC Protection and Access Plan Nears Completion

On Wednesday, April 28, 2004, the Tug Hill Commission and Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust facilitated two public sessions, in Lowville and Camden, on behalf of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the East Branch of Fish Creek (EBFC) Working Group. The sessions were arranged in order to provide information, and solicit input for the NYSDEC as they develop an access plan that will guide activities in the EBFC watershed. The development of the access plan is funded in part by a grant from the Great Lakes Coastal Restoration Program.

A brief history of the land conservation effort, and an overview of the potential access provided in the conservation easement agreements was presented. Formal comments were then solicited,

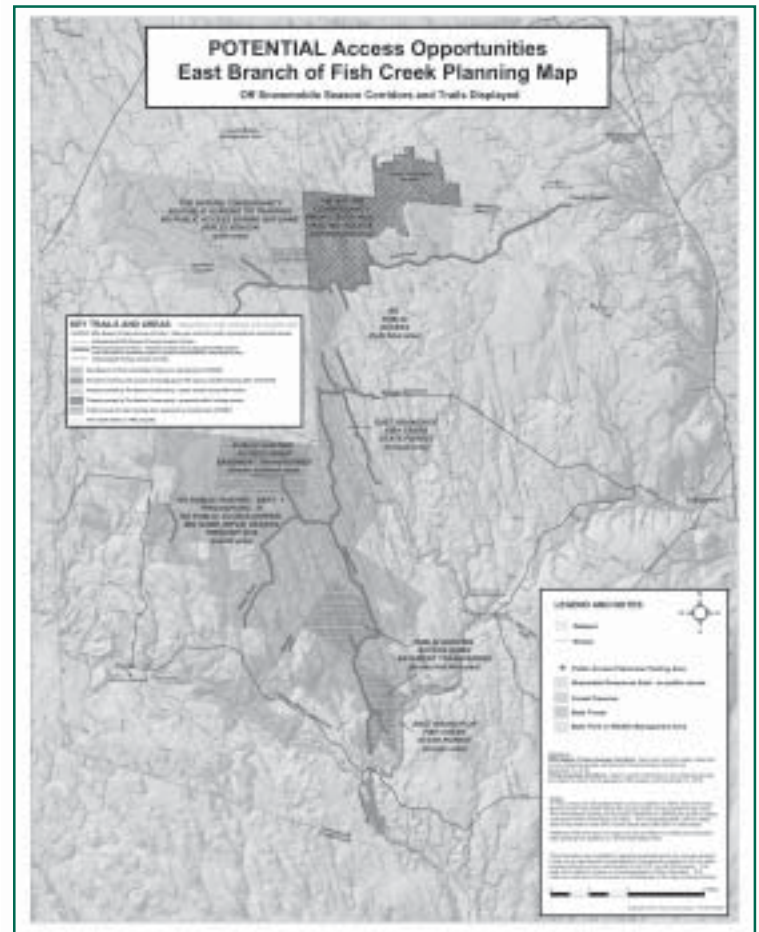
after which the Tug Hill Commission facilitated an informal question-and-answer period with representatives from the NYSDEC, The Nature Conservancy, LandVest (property manager for GMO Renewable Resources), and Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. Public ATV access (not acquired in conservation easement agreements) was a point of discussion during both sessions. Leased and public hunting rights, continued access for adjoining landowners, facilities needed for public and handicapped access, public access enforcement and signage, and the need to monitor any ecological impacts of allowed recreation were also mentioned. Members of the EBFC Working Group were present at each session, and provided valuable information and feedback to those attending.

The Nature Conservancy purchased the 45,000-acre tract from Hancock Timber Resource Group in 2002, and subsequently sold approximately 30,000 acres to GMO, a timber investment company.

The Nature Conservancy currently holds conservation easement agreements protecting the entire GMO property, and owns, outright, a strip of land

along the East Branch of Fish Creek. Both will be transferred to the State this year, and the

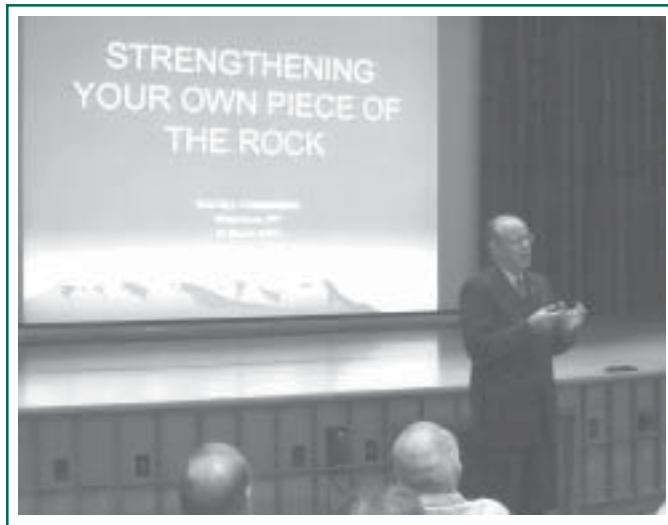
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Fort Drum's Economic Impact Over \$500M and Growing

Fort Drum, located just outside of Watertown, NY, is home to the 10th Mountain Division - the most frequently deployed division in the U.S. Army. A 2003 Economic Impact Study documented Fort Drum's economic impact as totaling \$529,736,252. Fort Drum is Upstate New York's largest employer. With 14,665 employees (12,117 military and 2,548 civilians), its contribution in wages alone totaled \$400.8M. Contracts for construction, services and supplies, and Impact Card purchases totaled nearly \$118M, with well over half of those contracts and purchases going to businesses in the immediate tri-county area of Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties; although some of that benefit undoubtedly accrued to businesses in Oneida and Oswego county as well. The complete report is available at www.fdrlo.org.

Fort Drum's economic impact to the region has grown steadily over the years and is about to get a substantial boost. The arrival of a new 3rd Brigade of approximately 2,800 soldiers plus additional support units to its two existing brigades will result in another 4,200 soldiers and 100 civilian employees over the next several months. On top of that, a \$392M project to build 1,500 new homes on the installation over the next couple of years will require approximately 1,800 locally



Lt. General Lawson Magruder, III, USAF Retired, former 10th Mountain Division Commander at Fort Drum, delivered the keynote at the 2004 Local Government Conference. He described his experience in building Fort Drum's ties with the surrounding communities and shared strategies for building community partnerships at any level - local or regional.

hired construction workers. This new construction alone will not meet the demand for military family housing in the region. There will still be a significant demand for attractive, affordable housing in the surrounding communities.

In the meantime, the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization (FDRLO) is working to prepare the case for keeping Fort Drum open as the military prepares for the 2005 round of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). They will be stressing Fort Drum's military value, its capability for expansion, economic impact, and community support with the theme of *Fort Drum: Planned - Positioned - Proven*. Many communities in and around the Tug Hill region have residents who

commute to jobs at Fort Drum. These residents contribute to the local economy and to the social fabric of their communities through their involvement in local government or volunteer activities. Fort Drum's closure would be devastating and far reaching.

FDRLO's membership consists of business people, local elected officials, economic developers, and a variety of community leaders and volunteers. Beyond its focus on the BRAC process, FDRLO works to coordinate effective communication and mutual support between the civilian and military communities on a variety of issues. For more information on any of the above, visit FDRLO's Website at www.fdrlo.org.

SAVE THE DATE:
Tug Hill Local Government Conference
Thursday, March 31, 2005

About Headwaters

Headwaters is the newsletter annual report of the New York State Tug Hill Commission.

The Tug Hill Commission is a state funded, regional agency overseen by a board of nine unpaid commissioners - two each from Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego counties, and one at-large.

Commissioners are appointed for five year terms: three each by the Governor, State Senate and State Assembly. The Commission has an administrative link to New York State's Department of State.

Chairman

Arnold E. Talgo
Oneida County

Vice Chairman

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Oswego County

Secretary

Anne C. Schuler
Oneida County

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Jefferson County
Timothy V. LeVan
Lewis County
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RACOG's Revitalization Efforts

The River Area Council of Government (RACOG) advances efforts to create a more walkable community and provide both recreational and health benefits for residents and tourists with the development of a year-round multi-use interconnected pedestrian trail system in the villages of Carthage and West Carthage. A key element to the revitalization initiative is how existing trails will link to waterfront parks and downtown commercial areas and enhance opportunities for sustainable economic development.

As residents in the area have the highest rate of heart disease in the nation, the Carthage Area Hospital joined with RACOG to promote a more walkable community and address

current health and fitness issues. In addition, a feasibility study funded by the NYS Department of Transportation through a Quality Communities initiative to finalize the transportation element of the Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Plan is nearing completion and will provide recommendations that will enhance pedestrian walkways, parking, and signage.

COG Partners with Local School for Trail Mapping

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) Recreation Committee and Carthage Central High School are teaming up to document pedestrian trails in the villages of Carthage and West Carthage by integrating classroom and hands-on-experience in the

application of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. Third year math and science students enrolled in the "Introduction to Geographic Information System (GIS)" course will identify and mark the position of the trails using Garmin Global Positioning System (GPS) units. The Tug Hill Commission is providing planning and technical assistance to the project along with their Trimble GPS unit.

The first phase of this trail mapping project has been completed. Carthage Central High School mapped out the existing trails in Carthage Park and on the abandoned railroad bed in the village of West Carthage near the river. Maps with this trail information on it have been produced and given to the RACOG Recreation Committee to start making recommendations for future proposed trails. When these trail recommendations have been approved to be proposed trails, Carthage High School will begin mapping them out during this upcoming school year.



RACOG Pedestrian Trail Map highlighting existing trails documented by Central Carthage High School students.

NOCCOG Emphasizes Cooperative Efforts

Funding agencies are tending to look more favorably at projects in which municipalities work together to achieve common goals. Costs are usually reduced, common standards are achieved, and often the quality of the work performed can be higher and more uniform. Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG) has

grasped this concept and ran with it, says NOCCOG's Local Government Advisor Steve Hunter.

Hunter, a Tug Hill Commission circuit rider, says NOCCOG has had some great successes recently in the area of local government records management, an area that doesn't get much publicity, but is vitally important to both smooth government operation and historical record-keeping. This July, NOCCOG successfully completed a NYS Archives grant project to create electronic indexes of the vital statistics for 11 Oneida County municipalities. The indexes covered records of births, marriages, deaths, and burials, and enables the immediate identification of existing records using a Microsoft Access database. In 2002, NOCCOG completed similar electronic indexes of municipal board meeting minutes for 16 municipalities, enabling quick searches for all municipal actions, local laws, etc.

Building on those two successes, NOCCOG applied for two more cooperative grants from the State Archives and received approval in July for both. They are:

- \$65,834 to develop electronic indexes of all property records in each of eight northern Oneida County municipalities. These database will identify and locate, among other things, all zoning and building permits, easements, variances, special permits, and violations cited and corrective action.

- \$120,750 in the State Archives e-Government category was granted for improvements to the Digital Towpath municipal website program. Digital Towpath is a low-cost template-based system that originated in

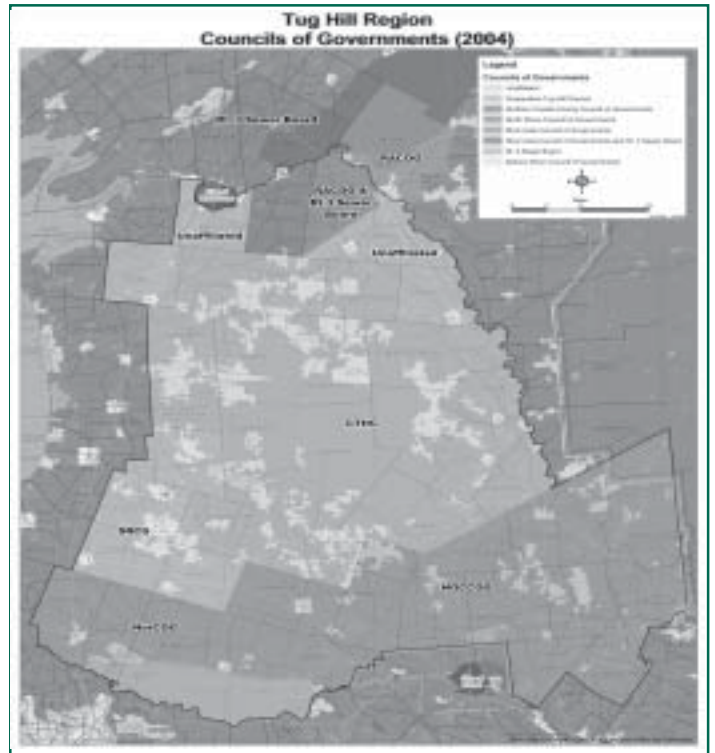
Northern Oneida County in 1999, with NOCCOG as one of the organizers. Its first year of website hosting, all of 16 Oneida County municipalities had Digital Towpath websites. That number has grown to 66 statewide. The grant will be used to expand security, flexibility, and enhanced utility of the system as it continues to grow and improve. The grant will also have an educational component to assist municipal folks responsible for maintaining the content of their respective websites.

NorCOG and SRCG News

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) and Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG) are acting as an umbrella organization for cost-effective sharing of Web hosting services for their respective member towns and villages. These shared services reduce the cost of Web hosting to a fraction of the other Web hosting arrangements otherwise available.

The participating municipalities and their Web sites can be found on the NorCOG Web site at www.norcog.org and SRCG Web site at www.salmonrivers.org.

NorCOG and SRCG communities were also active with planning activities in the last year, assisted by the Tug Hill Commission. The Town of Amboy completed and adopted its first comprehensive plan in the fall of 2003. The Town of West Monroe and Village of Central Square have begun the process of updating their existing comprehensive plans, while the Town and Village of Parish have been



jointly updating their zoning. Finally, the Village of Cleveland is completing the first phase of its waterfront revitalization program, and have begun working with the Commission on developing a comprehensive plan for the village.

CTHC Natural Resource Inventory

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) is preparing a *Natural Resource Inventory* for its member communities. The last inventory was completed in 1976 when nine CTHC towns jointly prepared the *Resource Management Plan* as a basis for their local zoning laws. It is the Council's hope that the information gathered for the project will assist CTHC towns in land use planning work and support any special/critical environmental area designations a

town might wish to target under the Tug Hill Reserve Act. The inventory will also provide town officials and the general public with greater information about the assets of the region and why they need protection. An overview of the project will be presented to the full Council at its September 23rd meeting.

CTHC is also collaborating with the Tug Hill Commission in support of the Black River "Blueway Trail" Project. Four of the member towns and all villages in the Council area will benefit from the designation of the Black River as a New York State "Blueway Trail". Each town has committed \$700 towards a match for the Black River "Blueway Trail" Environmental Protection Fund grant that was submitted in June 2004. CTHC has contributed \$1,000. A further description of the goals of the project is

Continued on page 8

Commission's GPS Capabilities

The Tug Hill Commission has obtained a Trimble GeoXT GPS (Global Positioning System) unit and is in the process of creating a program that will give regional municipalities the opportunity to borrow the unit to map recreational trails, infrastructure, etc. The Commission is planning to have the program up and running by next spring. Currently, an initial pilot project is underway with the Town of West Monroe where collected data will be used for planning purposes. If there is a need for to do a GPS project in your community sooner than next spring, please feel free to contact Commission staff member Mickey Dietrich (See page 1 & 2 for contact information).

"Blueway Trail" Designation Sought for the Black River

There has been talk for several years of taking a regional approach to coordinating the development and promotion of the Black River as a recreational attraction. This past year local officials expressed their interest in pursuing "Blueway Trail" designation for the Black River and the Commission helped to prepare a grant application to the 2004 Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program.

A "Blueway Trail" is a small boat and/or paddling route along a waterway that combines recreation and environmental awareness

while linking communities and land-based attractions. The Black River offers a variety of recreational activities along its 114 miles from Forestport to Lake Ontario: including fishing, canoeing, whitewater rafting and kayaking, and boating. Wastewater projects along the corridor have significantly improved water quality in recent years and several communities have focused revitalization efforts on the presence of the river. Both Jefferson and Lewis counties have developed promotional pieces for their own portions of the river that, together, cover approximately 71 miles of the river's length.

To date, 20 of the 37 towns and villages along the Black River (plus several tourism and economic development agencies) have passed resolutions and/or committed funding to the local match for a grant to fund the Black River Blueway Trail Plan. That plan would knit together all of the individual projects along the river into a cohesive strategy for developing the full potential of the river as a regional economic asset. The plan would yield recommendations for signage; access improvements; and promotional strategies to enhance the river's appeal as a destination. It would also provide the justification for funding to implement those recommendations through future rounds of the grant program.

In the meantime, the Black River Corridor Development Committee continues to keep things "flowing". One concern along the 40-mile stretch of river from Lyons Falls to Carthage has been the presence of hazardous debris such as old pilings and dam structures from the days when the river functioned as a canal.

This summer, a crew from the state's Aid-to-Navigation program marked those sites with navigational buoys in order to improve safety for those canoeing or fishing on the river. The committee is also meeting with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers about assistance with a long-term study to address sedimentation and other navigational issues on the river.

Flat Rock Wind Farm Construction Delayed

The 188 turbine, 300 megawatt wind farm and 10-mile transmission line in the Lewis County towns of Harrisburg, Lowville, Martinsburg, and Watson, slated to begin construction during the summer of 2004, has been delayed, most likely until next spring. The federal wind production tax credit, which makes the project economically feasible, expired in January and has not yet been renewed by Congress. According to project manager Willaim M. Moore, it is expected that the credit will be renewed sometime this fall.

The wind farm also had issues the past few months with its potential impact on the Indiana brown bat, which is federally protected on the endangered species list. Although the Final Environmental Impact Statement (available at www.flatrockwind.com) included a large section that addressed avian issues and found that the turbines would pose no significant hazard to bird populations, the issue was raised again when the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service determined in July, after further review, that the type of habitat found at the site of the wind farm is not hospitable for Indiana bat

populations.

Some overall mitigation measures for various anticipated impacts from the wind farm include: environmental monitoring during the construction phase; a sediment and erosion control plan; use of best management practices; funding for an acidic deposition study by SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry; post-construction monitoring to evaluate effects of birds and bats; and requirements to repair and/or upgrade town roads before and after construction.

ATV Issue Paper Released

The Commission recently released an issue paper entitled "ATVs in the Tug Hill Region: Issues to Consider," available for download from our website, by calling our Watertown office, or contacting local circuit riders. Initially written as a summary of three public meetings the Commission facilitated in Lewis County at the request of the County Legislature, the paper evolved into a comprehensive snapshot of what ATV recreation on Tug Hill is today, how municipalities can choose to manage ATVs on public roads and highways, an overview of current applicable laws and available resources, and challenges, considerations, and directions for ATV recreation in the future.

The Commission will organize an ATV summit this fall, similar to what was done around snowmobiling on Tug Hill in the late 1990's. The summit will aim to bring together county and local governments, ATV users,

enforcement agencies, the Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, legislative representatives, and other interested individuals to take a look at this issue together.

Nine Graduate from Local Leaders Institute

At its April 27th meeting in Boonville, the Tug Hill Commission recognized nine graduates of the 2003-2004 Tug Hill Local Leaders Institute. Commission Chairman Arnie Talgo presented each participant with a certificate of completion and a copy of The Heart of a Leader, by Ken Blanchard. Those completing the Local Leaders Institute included Britt Abbey, a Lowville-based realtor; Patricia Belge, a Pulaski area realtor; Ed Davis, chairman of

the Town of Lee planning board; Doug Dietrich, Montague deputy supervisor and Cooperative Tug Hill Council representative; Yvonne Kopy, Sandy Creek planning board member and former Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust volunteer; Keith Munz, Osceola code enforcement officer and a Cooperative Tug Hill Council representative; Norm Roof, Harrisburg town supervisor; Brian Sheley, manager of Lowville Farmers Cooperative; and Jeanne Wooding, CTHC assistant circuit rider.

This was the second year of the Tug Hill Local Leaders Institute. The Institute is designed to provide a greater understanding of the region and the issues that affect it. It thereby encourages more regional thinking and helps participants to recognize the outside factors and issues that affect their efforts at the local level. In noting the importance of the regional cooperation encouraged by the Commission, Chairman Talgo drew on a quote from the leadership book given to the participants,

stating that “None of us alone, is as smart as all of us together.”

The Institute begins with a full-day tour of the region, followed by four three-hour evening sessions held at various locations around the region. Topics include intermunicipal cooperation; strategies for preserving the region’s environment and rural character; economic trends and challenges; and leadership styles. Tuition is \$50 to help cover costs of the program.

Applications are already coming in for the 2004-2005 Local Leaders Institute. For more information, call the Commission office or visit our Web page.

Communities Build on New Infrastructure

Six years ago five neighboring communities that share eight miles of shoreline along

the Black River in Jefferson County formed a partnership to build, and “build on” a shared sewer system. To date the communities have constructed more than half of the \$25,000,000 system and reported last month having treated 4.5 million gallons/month of waste that otherwise would have found its way into the river. Now looking to the future, the communities are working to seize the economic opportunities created by this new infrastructure by reviewing their plans for attracting the type of development that will complement the look and feel of this scenic Olympic Byway. Attracting “quality” development will enhance both the marketability of the corridor and the quality of life in the corridor. The cooperative recognized early on that with new infrastructure comes a striking moment to adjust their development plans so that river views can be enhanced, the highway function maintained, and the overall attractiveness as prime developable property improved.

Commission Programs and Funding

Tug Hill Commission’s budget for the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2004 was close to \$1 million. Most of this funding came from the Commission’s annual state appropriation. A small amount came from grants, and revenues such as registration for our Local Government Conference.

Commission expenditures equal its funding revenue, again about \$1 million this past year. Eighty-two percent of Commission expenditures are for

staff salaries. The balance covers operational costs such as postage, office equipment, car expenses, and the like. The Commission employed 16, and helped support two full-time circuit rider positions through small grants to Tug Hill Councils of Governments (COGs). COGs use their revenues from member communities to help fund part-time circuit riders and other costs.

Commission funding has remained almost unchanged, except for cost of living adjustments, over most of the past decade.

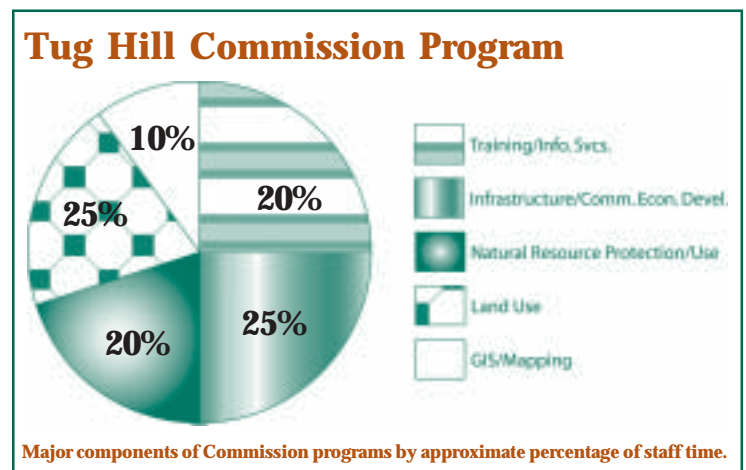
One way to gauge the value of the Commission’s budget is to look at what it brings back to the region. The

Commission usually helps Tug Hill local governments and organizations raise four to ten times the Commission’s annual budget in a given year.

Another way to gauge value is by what gets done in

Tug Hill communities. Each year on average the Commission works with some 20 local communities on revisions to land use codes, and works on

Continued on page 8



OLWAC Nears Deadline

The Oneida Lake Watershed Advisory Council (OLWAC) completed the Oneida Lake State of the Lake and Watershed Report in 2003, and completed the work of the Working Groups in 2004. The Working Groups studied and provided recommendations on key issues for the Oneida Lake watershed: flooding and water level management, soil erosion and sedimentation, on-site septic systems, declining fisheries, exotic species, cormorants, boating laws, and road salt application and storage. Public meetings were held in the spring of 2004 to share the recommendations of these working groups with the public. A summary of project recommendations and recommended next steps is currently being

prepared for public distribution in the summer of 2004. The current round of the council's watershed work is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2004. For more information visit www.cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake/.

EBFC continued from page 2

land along the East Branch designated a new State Forest. The Nature Conservancy has retained ownership of the northern portion of the property, approximately 14,000 acres, and will also convey a conservation easement agreement to the State this year.

The conservation easement agreements provide a framework for certain access and recreational uses, and the NYSDEC is currently developing a draft access plan for the EBFC easement properties, and future State Forest, based on that framework as well as the variety of comments received from the public via mail, phone,

fax, and in open meetings. The NYSDEC continues to urge individuals to submit written comments to their offices while they are composing a first draft of the plan. They anticipate that the draft will be presented for public review in late summer or early fall. Additional public sessions will follow the release of the draft.

For more information or to submit comments, contact: Brendan Kelly, Senior Forester, NYSDEC, 7327 NYS Rte. 812, Lowville, NY 13367, 315-376-3521, bkelly@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

CTHC continued from page 5

contained here in *Headwaters*.

Also, the Council would like to welcome three new CTHC supervisors and numerous other new local officials in the region. CTHC now has 16 towns belonging to the Council and are always looking for interested folks to

sit on the executive board or to become their town's CTHC representative. If interested, please do not hesitate to contact circuit rider Jane Jones or any of the board members.

Programs and Funding continued from page 7

some 70 other projects from watershed protection to Main Street revitalization and business development, especially in the areas for forest products, farming, and tourism and recreation.

The Commission anticipates a growing demand for assistance in land use planning and natural resource protection as communities struggle to manage growth and development around the region.

August 2004

 Printed on Recycled Paper



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